



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# BACKGROUND

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*Community Social Services WALK:*

## The growing crisis in the sector

Our community social services are more than a collection of agencies delivering support to children, youth and adults throughout British Columbia. They are a critical, province-wide network that protects and strengthens quality of life for everyone.

Community social services agencies deliver a wide range of important services, including child care, employment and residential supports to people with developmental and physical disabilities, support for women escaping violence, assistance to immigrant communities, and more.

Unfortunately, this largely invisible sector continues to suffer from years of chronic under-funding and under-resourcing. Agencies are hard-pressed to meet costs. Waitlists for services are overflowing. And although human resources are the most important component of any agency's ability to provide quality care and support, community social services work remains undervalued.

A 2007 study by employers found the sector had a one in five rate of turnover. "The key reasons given (by employers) for recruitment and retention challenges are: economic conditions (50%), shortage of qualified staff (77%) and wage rates in the sector (80%)." *CSSEA Recruitment and Retention Report, August 2007.*

A SPARC study commissioned by the B.C. Government and Services Employees Union (BCGEU) in 2008 had similar findings. In addition, it pointed to the overall instability of the sector resulting from short-term funding models for non-profit social service delivery.

It's time for our politicians and decision-makers to address the serious issues facing this sector and commit to making our community social services stronger.

There are about 15,000 unionized workers in the community social services sector.

Over 2,000 adults with developmental disabilities are currently on waitlists for services.

In 1998, the start rate for a unionized front-line group home worker was \$14.45 per hour. Twelve years later, in 2010, the start rate for this same worker will be \$15.54. That represents an increase of \$1.09 over 12 years.

Between 2002 and 2008, child care funding was cut by \$50 million annually.

For more information, visit <[www.CommunitySocialServicesMatter.ca](http://www.CommunitySocialServicesMatter.ca)>.

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